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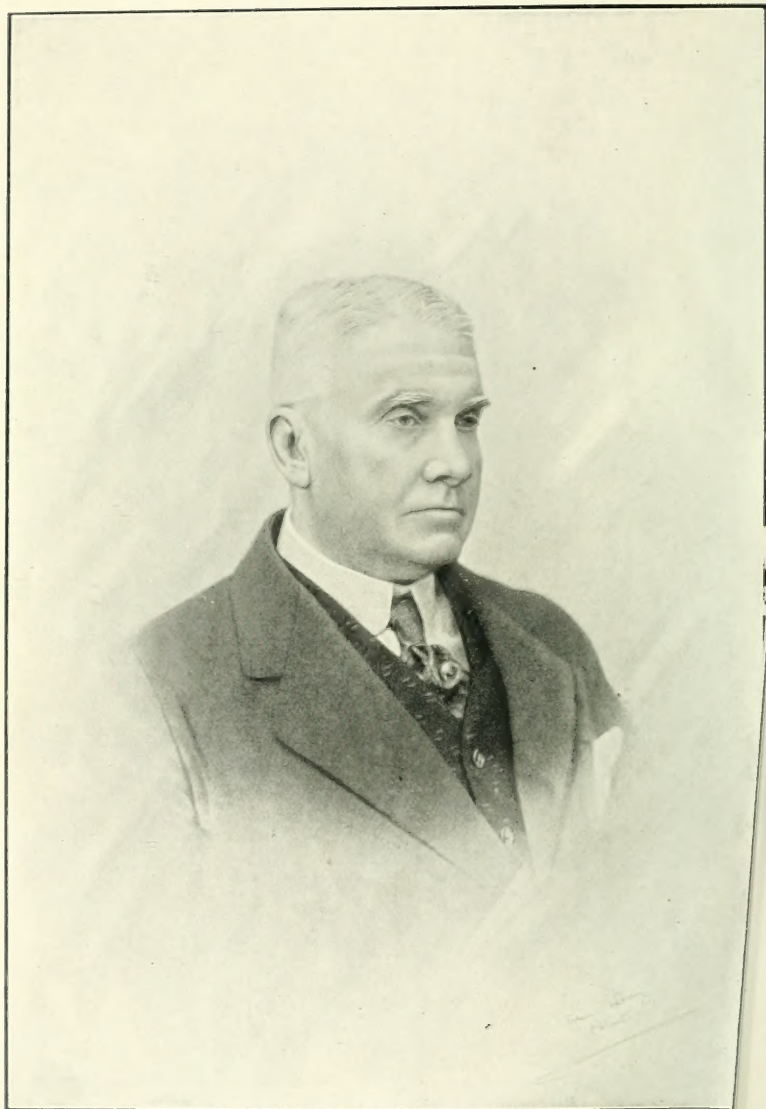




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PAT LOVETT

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# JOURNALISM IN INDIA

BY  
PAT LOVETT

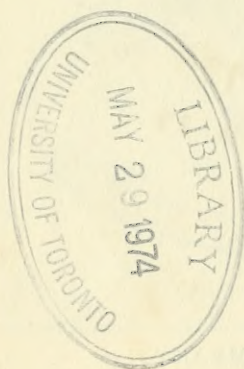


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## A TRIBUTE

Mr. Pat Lovett as an individual was little known outside his circle of friends. It must, however, be added that his friends were many, and that he was lavish in his affections and none too particular, so long as the recipient could boast of a touch of amiable and piquant eccentricity in some form or other. Pat Lovett lived a life in which the sole criterion of excellence in a man was his capacity to share a good, hearty "joke"—and the sense of humour, thank God, is found in such unlooked-for places that Pat Lovett was at ease more completely in a homely, convivial environment than in high-brow society. If the latter did come in at times in the tenor of his life, the all-essential test must needs be fulfilled. There was thus this limit, but no other, to the range of his friends.

But Mr. Pat Lovett as the 'Ditcher' in the columns of the *Capital* was known universally; no limitation of any kind applied to his popularity; his sway was acknowledged in all the far-flung provinces of the country. Week after week, the *Capital*

came out with his Diary ; and week after week, the Diarist's comments—sometimes caustic, uniformly spicy and always penetrating—were broadcasted “throughout the length and breadth of the land ” (as the saying goes) by a goodly number of the provincial and local papers. To Mr. Gandhi's weekly observations in the *Young India* should be given the pride of place in regard to the honour of being extensively extracted by other journals ; the Ditcher assuredly came in second for that honour.

The newspaper-reading public in India are familiar with the Ditcher, but the vogue of the “ pen-name ” was so great, and the repute attached thereto so dazzling that the Ditcher eclipsed Pat Lovett. The former appealed to the heart and impressed the imagination of hundreds and thousands of readers who scarce bothered themselves to divine something of the personality of the man as distinguished from the writer. It follows then, that, as is true of every writer of merit, the study of Pat Lovett emphatically resolves itself into a study of the Ditcher.

The Ditcher's Diary has been the “star” feature of the *Capital* for over fifteen years. As a good portion thereof is a commentary



upon passing events, there arises the need of editing it before publication so as to preserve all that is of abiding and universal interest. This task must involve time and labour; and the publication of the Ditcher's Diary in a book-form, which, I hope, will be undertaken sooner or later—rather sooner than later—may not appear for sometime to come. Meanwhile, however, it has been found possible to make available in this brochure two outstanding literary productions of the Ditcher—the first being the lectures on *Journalism in India* which he delivered at the invitation of the Calcutta University, and the second, *An Outsider's Odyssey*, which was printed early in this decade for “private circulation only.” The plan of *Journalism in India* is that it should be a kind of historical survey; it would, however, be truer to say that it is at least as autobiographical as it is biographical of Indian journalism. By the same token, the *Odyssey* was intended to be a kind of personal reminiscences; but it would be equally true to say that it is no less historical than autobiographical. In other words, the dividing line between personal history and the history of journalism in these writings is thin indeed,



and almost imperceptible. The explanation for this is simple enough. The Ditcher was less a human personality than an out-and-out journalist.

"It is only in journalism that the Celtic Irish achieve distinction, for journalism is primarily a matter of gossip and the Celtic Irish can talk well"—states St. John Irvine in a monograph on Parnell. This somewhat ribaldish *ipse dixit* applies with great force to the Ditcher. A good talker, an accomplished writer, he was also an attentive listener. A mere talker is also otherwise called a gossip-monger; a mere writer can never achieve anything of note; a mere listener may possibly suit a bore. But a combination of the three characters is rare; and it is such a happy and harmonious blend that accounts for the uniqueness of personality which is the source of the perennial charm and the universal appeal of the Ditcher's writings.

Above all, the Ditcher typified that broad humanity and urbane outlook which journalism fosters when professed in the true spirit.

What if another sit beneath the shade  
Of the broad elm I planted by the way,—  
What if another heed the beacon light

I set upon the rock that wrecked my keel,—  
 Have I not done my task and served my kind?  
 Be it said, that Pat Lovett did his task, as he  
 alone could have done it, and served his kind  
 with all the spontaneous, almost reckless,  
 generosity he was capable of.

C. S. RANGASWAMI.



# \*JOURNALISM IN INDIA

## LECTURE I

Journalism in India, Gentlemen, derives from journalism in England, and in spite of faults and shortcomings is a credit to the parent stock. *Patris est filius*, more especially in maintaining the most cherished English tradition that it is the duty of the political journalist to publish his opinions even at the risk of fine and imprisonment; there is also another strong family resemblance in making the leading article a potent factor in shaping public opinion. In any historical sketch of the newspaper Press in India, such as my lectures must necessarily amount to, this cardinal fact should inform both narrative and criticism. True though it be that even the most widely read newspapers in this country cannot pretend to anything like the circulation of the great London or English provincial papers, it would be silly affectation to pretend that the influence they wield is inconsiderable, even in this paradise of bureaucratic authority, the gates of which are opening slowly and

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\* First *Adharchandra Mookerjee Lecture*, delivered at the Asutosh Building, Calcutta University, on April 18, 1926.

reluctantly to an eager but fluttering democracy, still uncertain of its foothold.

The real development of the art and business of journalism, as it is understood in the West, dates in India from the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885. There were generals before Agamemnon, and there were editors before Surendra Nath Banerjea; but the influence of the Press on the administration of the country and the political education of the intelligentsia turned out by the Indian Universities made itself felt with ever increasing force from that epochal event in which I participated in the humble capacity of a descriptive reporter. The papers which were native and racy of the soil gained a new importance; whereas those edited and owned by Englishmen, who voiced the views of the British Raj and the British Plantation, were compelled to a new orientation. In India a great journalist is in nine cases out of ten also a great publicist, and this identicalness will probably endure for many years to come. In the circumstance it was inevitable that Indian journalism should become the handmaiden, nay something more, of Indian Nationalism, while the Outlander Press, if I may be allowed

the term for its expressiveness and historic associations, had perforce to accept the role of *Defensor Fidei*. Well, Gentlemen, I think I can claim without a suspicion of vainglory to be a product of that renaissance, for my career as a journalist began in Bombay just two years before the first Indian National Congress, in the tail-end of an era in which the only politics discussed by the bulk of newspapers in India were English politics, with the Irish Question as *piece de resistance*, and the Russian Invasion of the North-Western Frontier an inexhaustible beaker of heady wine. There was an editor I knew in those days, an Irishman by the same token, who boasted that out of three hundred leaders he had written in a single year no less than two hundred were fulminations against the Muscovite Terror. He honestly believed they had made the Bear tremble and pause. The proceedings of the National Congress gave editors, British and Indian, topics more germane to dwell upon, and in this re-adjustment of bearings lay the germs of the striking growth of the last forty years which I propose to sketch to the best of my ability if you will bear with me. A ribald critic of the Celtic Irish has stated in a recently



published monograph on Parnell, that "it is only in journalism that the Celtic Irish achieve distinction, for journalism is primarily a matter of gossip and the Celtic Irish can talk well." I belong to the race so contemptuously dismissed, but if I can only justify this partial and not quite honest *ipse dixit* in my address to you, I will forgive St. John Irvine his Orange bigotry and narrow vision.

In order to illustrate the advance made in journalism in India in the last forty years I cannot do better than to sketch its condition when I enlisted as a private in the ranks. On 15th October, 1883, a date of blessed memory—a capital feast in my life's calendar—I joined *The Times of India* as an apprentice. I had no journalistic training or experience behind me; so that my only equipment was a good education, a stout heart, buoyant youth, and perhaps that flair of the Celtic Irish to which I have already referred; but I was lucky in my choice, for *The Times* was then, as now, a leading Anglo-Indian daily, and maintained a high tradition of literary achievement of the utmost value to a neophyte who regarded his profession as a profession and not as a trade. It was a tradition estab-



lished by Dr. George Buist, a Scotch scholar and scientist of eminence, and consolidated by Colonel Nassau Lees, a famous Orientalist, whose memory is still green and sweet with the Moslem *literati* of Bengal. The latter was sole proprietor when I joined the staff; in fact it was he who recruited me. Although at that time he had definitely retired from India and lived in England he still kept a hold on the policy and conduct of the paper; to his example and bent was due a scholarly elan which distinguished *The Times of India* among the dailies of the country. Henry Curwen was editor from 1880 to his death in 1892. I was under his influence during the whole of my apprenticeship of five years, and as it was exerted with tutorial directness and solicitude it powerfully affected my conception of the whole duty of a journalist. From the start he impressed on me the futility of literary toil unless my aim was a complete mastery of my profession. "Journalism," he would say, "is a severe and a jealous mistress, who will not brook a rival in any shape or form. You must give to her your days and nights and the best that is in you. Her reward will not be material wealth but the supreme joy of a great duty

well done."

Curwen was a poet before he became a journalist. He was related distantly to William Wordsworth, the Lake Poet *par excellence*. Before coming to India he published under the title of "Sorrow and Song" a book of sympathetic studies of the literary struggles of some famous poets. The poetic imagination never left him in all his years of practical journalism, but instead of handicapping his progress it assisted his success, for when he died the paper he still edited and partly owned was securely founded in a position in which it favourably compared with so important an English provincial paper as *The Manchester Guardian*. In the midst of his editorial and proprietorial turmoil he found relaxation in the writing of three novels of a romantic character which appeared week after week in serial form, adding not a little to the popularity of the paper.

With all his romance and mysticism, however, Curwen was true to type in business. He was a representative of the British Plantation with very little use for Indian political aspirations. Lord Reay, the advanced Dutchman, who governed the Bombay Presidency, from 1885

to 1890, was Curwen's *bete noir*. The editor could see nothing good in the Gladstonian who gave to the Municipal Corporation of the city of Bombay a liberal constitution which for long years was the envy of every other city in India. He concentrated in a farewell leader the bitterness of soul which for five weary years had been nursed by the British Plantation against the statesman who was among the earliest of the foreign satraps to perceive and admit that, in the famous phrase of Parnell, it was not possible to put bounds to the march of a nation, and in accordance with this conviction, to give reality to Lord Ripon's solemn promise of self-government. The Parthian outburst of sustained vituperation was clever but dishonest, yet it so accurately interpreted the feelings of the dominant race that the full text was cabled to London by Reuter and reproduced by *The Times* and other organs of English opinion. Curwen died less than two years later without retracting a single article of the faith so patristically expressed. He left it to his successor as his last will and testament. Such is the irony of things that that successor proved to be Thomas Jewell Bennett who had hitherto been the right-hand man of

Grattan Geary, editor and proprietor of *The Bombay Gazette*, the gallant champion of Lord Reay's policy. Curwen had detected with unerring instinct the Marian strain in the young man from Bristol, who, before joining Geary, had won his spurs by leader-writing for *The Standard*, the London Conservative organ.

But Lord Reay did not monopolize all the antipathy of the editor of *The Times of India* and the constituency he represented; a very large share was reserved for Gladstone after he had committed himself to the principle of Home Rule for Ireland. Parnell was a dirty dog, odious and infamous. I myself got into sad disgrace on the night that Reuter announced the results of the General Election of 1885 at which 86 Irish Nationalists were returned under the leadership of the Squire of Avondale, the "Uncrowned King of Ireland." I was living at a hotel whose proprietress was Irish but whose customers were mostly military officers and Government officials. I rushed into the dining-room where the company was assembled at dinner and proclaimed the glad tidings. There was an ominous silence, broken after a few tense moments by the vicious snarl of a senior Civilian: "You



want a few more Phoenix Park murders I suppose." I became a social pariah from that night out.

Grattan Geary, who owned and edited *The Bombay Gazette*, was an Irishman and a Home Ruler at heart, but he had to be very circumspect in his comments on the burning question of the hour. His tepidity was exasperating and it was vain; it did not save him from the hatred and malice of European Society which would not allow him, although he was President of the Bombay Corporation, to present the address of welcome to Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence, at the landing at the Apollo Bunder, the Gateway of India, in 1890. He had, it was dishonestly alleged, shown sympathy with the Fenians, which was enough to damn him in the eyes of every British patriot.

There was no Indian-edited English daily at Bombay in those far off days, but Malabari published as a weekly *The Indian Spectator*, which in excellent English took an Indian survey of men and matters. His views on female education among Indians were received with respect, but in matters of general policy he did not count for much. Effective journal-

ism was practically confined to *The Times of India* and *The Bombay Gazette* until the Guzeratee dailies, *The Bombay Samachar* and the *Jame-e-Jamshed*, challenged the monopoly. Their attacks were so insistent and well-directed that their English rivals thought it wise to retain Parsee reporters to translate elegant extracts. In Calcutta and at Madras Indian journalism employing the medium of the English language made an earlier start, and at the time of my narrative *The Hindu Patriot*, *The Indian Mirror*, *The Bengalee* and *The Hindu* had already won their spurs and become antagonists to be reckoned with by the Bureaucracy and its supporters.

After this historical divagation I will, with your permission, hark back to the domestic economy of the typical newspaper which made a real appeal to the general reader forty years ago. The literary staff of *The Times of India* consisted of an Editor, an Assistant Editor, a Sub-Editor, a Chief Reporter (all imported from England), and four reporters recruited locally, two of whom were Parsees. The ménage of *The Bombay Gazette* was similar. I was an extra—an

experiment with no counterpart in the rival shop. There was a nondescript mob of press-readers of all sorts and conditions, the same as we see to-day even in the most elaborately equipped newspaper offices. The indifference of the average newspaper proprietor to the quality of the proof-correctors is a puzzle of Indian journalism. Any old has-been or down-at-heels is good enough for the job provided he has sufficient English to pass proofs so as to drive the unfortunate sub-editor to distraction. In most offices, yea even in this year of grace, the sub-editor is also the chief reader, and one of his most trying duties is to make sense out of the "clean proofs" (save the mark !) served up by half-educated men whose wages are so lean that they have to live on the smell of an oil-rag and thus become the recognized tramps of the newspaper world. Strange as it may tell to posterity, the trial of the sub-editor has become heavier since the introduction of type-setting machinery.

The average Indian compositor of the Old Law understood little, in most cases nothing, of the sense of the copy he was hand-setting, but he was wonderfully accurate in his combi-



nation of types to print a word he had deciphered with uncanny wizardy. I have had a first proof at three o'clock in the morning, just before going to press, of copy given to the compositor half-an-hour before, which contained hardly a mistake, literal or grammatical. It was an extreme case I admit, the compositor in question being a rare star of the first magnitude ; but it is no exaggeration that the general run of Indian compositors, in the days before the advent of the linotype, formed a Milky Way of glittering gems before whose magnificence the lino-operators of to-day pale their insignificant fires. Few of the old brigade are left, and soon the species will be as extinct as the dodo. When I remember how their talent and conscientiousness made amends for the incurable vices of the vagrant readers I regret the passing with a personal sorrow.

Rotary presses were unknown in India in the Eighties ; there was therefore less haste in getting the paper ready for the press but more leisure to attend to its literary content. When an outstanding public man made an important speech late in the evening or after dinner on a subject that was keenly agitating the public

mind, the reporters did not spoil the effect by rushing a garbled summary into the composing room to be set up for the next morning's paper; they had the good sense to agree to print just a short note announcing the delivery and value of the speech with a promise of a full report on the following day. The practice had advantages which to my mind are not counterbalanced by the modern method in which fulness and accuracy are often sacrificed to speed of publication. At any rate the author of the speech was flattered and the public who looked up to him for light and leading was satisfied that the newspapers had given him a fair chance. *Agnosco veteris vestigia flammæ*. I am sadly conscious that it were vain to attempt to restore the early dispensation, but when one compares the summary of a great debate in the Legislative Assembly on the Reforms or the Bengal Ordinance given by his pet daily paper the morning after the event with the official report appearing a fortnight later, he is prone to sigh for the days when editors thought less of what the Americans expressively call a "hunch," and more of a fair deal to all parties in the disputation.

During the years of my apprenticeship the proceedings of the Bombay Corporation were carefully reported in both English dailies, specially qualified reporters being put on the job. They were not hurried ; a 24 hours' delay in the appearance of their scrip made no difference to the editor or his clientele ; the consequence—a true and unbiased account of what had really taken place. By this means the press materially assisted the municipal reforms for which the citizens clamoured ; further it encouraged that high sense of civics for which Bombay has been distinguished throughout the ages. Both Curwen and Grattan Geary exacted from their reporters an equipment which would, in these degenerate times, be considered unconscionable for the wages paid ; and wages were much lower then. Although the purchasing power of the rupee was greater in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century than in the first quarter of the Twentieth, newspapermen in India, forty years ago, could boast with Sydney Smith that their motto was : *Tenui musam meditamur avena*—“ We cultivate literature upon a little *dal bhat*.” Ability to take a verbatim shorthand note was *sine qua non* even in the most junior

member of the staff, and the latest recruit was allowed six months to qualify. I hated the mechanical drudgery of shorthand, but there was no help for it. I had to devote to the acquirement of a speed equal to the swift torrential eloquence of Pherozeshah Mehta laborious days and nights in which I could have learnt, colloquially at any rate, four of the chief Indian vernaculars. Public meetings were always well reported in the Bombay papers in those days, so also cases in the High Court. In addition to this the papers alternately provided the official reporters of the proceedings of the Legislative Council. As any member of the reporting staff might be called upon at any moment to perform any of the duties I have enumerated you will easily understand how essential and logical was the editorial exaction. I laid the balm to my tortured soul that I derived much good from the severe mental discipline, but I can honestly say that my memory was ever quicker than my fingers and far more reliable. Soon after my apprenticeship was over I blossomed into an editor, and I immediately made a joyous bonfire of my shorthand note-books. On the other hand many a contemporary gloried in his



manual dexterity to the end of the chapter ; and who am I to say that his was not the greater distinction ?

In lines other than verbatim note-taking reporters were encouraged to specialize. Politics were above their sphere, and beyond an editorial note on some law suit or public meeting they were not expected to ruffle the tenor of the leader page. That was the mysterious demesné of the Editor and the Assistant Editor, helped by regular and irregular contributors who belonged mostly to the Indian Education Service, with odd Indian Civil Servants and Military Officers thrown in. The idea of an Associated Press had not then been conceived, so there were many openings for Special Correspondence, the editors being liberal in that direction. I was fortunate to develop a faculty of writing popularly on sports of all kinds, and in the last three last years of my connection with *The Times of India* I travelled the length and breadth of the country describing race meetings, pig-sticks, and polo tournaments, yet these were not all the ingredients of my *olla podrida*. The writer of the article on newspapers in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britan-*

nica mourns the passing from English journalism of the old-time war correspondents like William Russell and Archibald Forbes ; with equal justification I mourn the passing from Indian journalism of special correspondents like Kipling, Rattray, Arnold Wright, and most brilliant of all, poor Frank White. The Associated Press does not, perhaps can not, make good the deficiency, and the newspapers have lost in consequence a lustre which made them attractive to men of education and taste.

I have mentioned the association of the Indian Education Service with journalism. At Bombay it was intimate. The Elphinstone College, the counterpart of the Presidency College in Calcutta, was the workshop in which were forged countless leaders that appeared in *The Times of India* and *The Bombay Gazette*, each of which had its partisans. Professors Wordsworth and Forrest affected the conservative organ ; Professors Kirkham and Oxenham its liberal rival. It is eternally true that no man of action can be so consistently and cynically an advocate of brutalism as your man of letters, and the writers I have named in no way belied this

characteristic when their blood was roused to fulminations *ex-cathedra*, the splendour of which dazzled the professional journalist and left him lamenting his own incompetence. But on the whole this "Educational" connection was to the good; it imparted to the columns given to the guidance of public opinion a literary excellence and a sense of history and logic which are certainly not salient qualities of the commercialized journalism of to-day. We used to race for sport in the Eighties and early Nineties; the horses were our pride and skilful horsemanship our consuming desire. They race for big stakes nowadays and the horses are mere pawns in a corrupt and debasing gambling game. Commercialization again! It has entered every department of life. Journalism in India could no more resist the invasion than journalism in England or elsewhere in the British Empire, for it had to be recognized that the modern newspaper depended for its financial success primarily upon its receipts from advertisements; and blatant puffing, however crude in expression, is dearer to the advertiser's heart than grace of style.

The first signal triumph of the Indian



National Congress was the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the first election under which was held in the following year. This Act enfranchised some recognized public bodies and constituencies, and gave the members of the Supreme and Local Legislative Councils the right to put questions to Government on matters of administration; also the right to discuss the annual budget. It is significant of the slow and toilsome march of democracy in India that no advance on this restricted measure of Home Rule was made until the Minto-Morley Reforms came into force fifteen years after. But such as it was the Lansdowne Act was a white stone in the progress of journalism which has since proceeded *pari passu* with the expansion of political freedom. The debates in the central legislature acquired a new zest for the leading newspapers of India which had consequently to be enlarged and produced at a heavier cost. The day of the modern manager had dawned and he has never looked back. In a great newspaper, published not a thousand miles from College Square, the actual concrete manager is a far bigger man than the misty editor in his many and embarrassing manifestations. Until nearly



pattern was no longer feasible, and the right of interpellation by members of the Legislative Councils encouraged Indian editors openly to assume the mantle of Elijah and whip with scorpions a Government whose policy they denounced as unsympathetic and coercive. I had to wait until 1897, when I finally migrated from Bombay to Calcutta for keeps, to get into intimate touch with Indian journalists who employed the English language as the vehicle of aspiration and polemic. Bombay sported no important daily edited by an Indian in the national interest. Soon after the birth of the Congress, Pherozeshah Mehta, Thomas Blaney and other liberal-minded citizens assisted the foundation of an evening paper called *The Advocate of India*, which promised to become the organ of the Congress party, a promise never fulfilled for reasons it is unnecessary to enumerate at this distance of time. At the instance of Jehanghir Murzban, who had become its sole proprietor, I took the editorship in 1892. Its fortunes were at the lowest ebb, and as an organ of political opinion it counted for nothing. The only one of the original promoters who took any interest in it was Thomas Blaney who wrote unceasingly on

municipal affairs, reproducing and emphasizing the *ipse dixits* he had already let off at the two weekly meetings of the Bombay Corporation of which he was a prominent and influential member. His views on hygiene, water-supply, and civism generally were sound, and such were his services to the city that a grateful community after his death commemorated him by a statue erected in front of the municipal buildings. He could write good plain terse Anglo-Saxon, but his knowledge of polite literature was sadly to seek, and for this ignorance I was more than once the butt of a rival's satire. I had a small and limited staff : myself, and two reporters who covered the police and the law courts. It was difficult in the circumstances to be meticulous in the work of redaction. The humour of the situation was thrilling when, as on one occasion, I rescued my poor repute from the very brink of precipice. Communal riots had broken out between Hindus and Muhammadans, and as there had been much bloodshed the city was placed under martial law. The opportunity for an evening paper to snatch a scoop was too good to be lost ; so for the nonce I deserted the editorial sanctum (spare the pieces !) for re-



porting adventure, leaving the busy proprietor, who had other things to think about and manage, to send in the leaders for the day. I got back from the stricken field somewhat late one afternoon to find that the leader page had been set up and was waiting only for the press order. Having been through some stirring scenes during the day I was in a fine frenzy to rush my impressions into copy, but thank my lucky stars I controlled my impatience to glance through the first leader in which Blaney made a scornful attack on *The Pioneer* for daring to sneer at his beloved Corporation. *The Pi* had the impudence to say that a certain debate, in which Blaney took part, reminded it of the famous colloquy in which Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek participated to the mirth of all the world for all time. "Who cares a hang," exclaimed the irate Blaney, "for the opinions of two obscure knights, probably *ap-ke-waste wallahs* who got their titles for sitting on the steps of Government House." This sort of thing was hilariously exciting but it was not business, and soon Blaney ceased to write for *The Advocate* owing, he averred, to my professional jealousy which prompted me

either to reject his articles or to make a hash of them. I was sorry to lose his co-operation, and I have no doubt many missed his preachments on the ideals of civism; but then as now, to adapt the famous apothegm of Gladstone, the Press in India was the privilege of the educated classes, not the patrimony of the people, and an editor who valued the reputation of his paper had to be careful of the character of its literary contents.

To popularize *The Advocate of India* and increase its circulation, which was decidedly tenuous, I made a strong feature of sport, and as the town had gone nearly mad over cricket, especially over the international matches between the Europeans and the Parsees, my brain-wave carried me on its crest to unexpected success. On the other hand, I catered for the more intellectual of my readers by writing twice a week a humorous skit on the meetings of the Corporation; but *haute politique* I neglected almost entirely. The National Congress doctrines had no direct representation in the daily papers of Bombay which were printed in English; Indian national aspirations, however, were lucidly expounded and trenchantly defended by



Dinshaw Wacha in the English section of the Guzeratee weekly, *Kaiser-i-Hind*. *The Indian Spectator* was a law unto itself. Malabari was amenable to no discipline but that self-imposed, and he was utterly contemptuous of a party badge.

When I came to Calcutta in the fall of 1897 to join *The Indian Daily News* of happy memory, I discovered a hive of newspaper industry of the existence of which I had hitherto been ignorant. Not only were newspapers more numerous than at Bombay, but the field covered was far more extensive. Both Anglo-Indian and Indian interests were fittingly represented, and there was a strong weekly Press, social, political, and technical, such as did not exist in any other town in India. *The Englishman* was admittedly the leading Anglo-Indian paper with probably the largest, but certainly "the most influential" circulation in Bengal. It sturdily proclaimed without reservation the sentiments of the Europeans to whom Lord Ripon was the Devil incarnate. Its style was downright—what the poet Blake might have called "naked beauty displayed—" exactly what its clientele demanded. It was still in the sole possession

of the Saunders family, and the most able of the "J.O.B.'s" rode in the whirlwind and directed the storm. His editor, Macdonald, was a man after his own heart. *The Englishman* was the first newspaper in Calcutta to instal linotypes in the printing room, but never at any time did its technique approach that of its formidable rival, *The Statesman*, which owes its admirable order and array to its founder, Robert Knight, who was also responsible for that other inspiration of genius, the Sunday issue with its wealth of "Special Shorts." In those days the Chowringhee oracle was the direct antithesis of the Hare Street thunderer; it fostered Indian political aspirations with Non-conformist conscientiousness and tentation, but when S. K. Ratcliffe, the Fabian, was installed in the editorial caserne, it became more Indian than the Indian papers themselves. This Augustan age lasted for three years, beginning with the Curzonian Durbar which was held at Delhi ostensibly to commemorate the accession of Edward the Seventh to the Imperial *gadi*. Ratcliffe was a slashing leader-writer, bursting with all that pomp and gallantry of a journalism which arrogates to

itself the right to govern the world. Many people who did not agree with him liked to read him : but furtively and shamefacedly. He left India in 1906, and in 1911 the paper he edited so ably in the Indian cause performed a complete *volte face*. After that, in the hands of J. A. Jones, the most uncompromising of Anglo-Indians, it became the most widely circulated paper in the whole of India, and the best advertising medium. Jones was one of the seven omniscient British journalists who in 1907 signed a letter which appeared in a prominent place in *The Times* (London), in which they scorned the gross insinuation that there was anarchism or revolution in Bengal in consequence of the Partition ; but like the other signatories he had been hypnotized by Ratcliffe, the author of the effusion ; as soon as the personal magnetism of the Fabian was withdrawn Jones returned to the normal mentality of a countryman and disciple of Lloyd George of " Steel Frame " renown. But all the glory of the change in the fortunes of *The Statesman* did not appertain to Jones ; a very substantial share belonged to H. E. Watson, a capable Manager of the modern type. He was imported to

control a big rotary press and its concomitants, chief of which was a page of illustrations after the style of the big London dailies. He exploited the advertisers with fearless confidence and advanced the rates to a figure that made them gasp but yield. *The Statesman* is now a very valuable property. According to the ideas of the proprietors themselves its market value is a crore of rupees. You may legitimately deduct 50 per cent. for swelled head, but even then you get a price extraordinary for a newspaper in India which has little or no job-work to support it. *The Times of India* and *The Pioneer* possess lucrative job presses, and the former has struck oil with *The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, the fruitful idea of Coleman who came to Bombay from *The Times* (London); still the magnates of Chowringhee very recently declined to join a newspaper combine in India unless it was given a 75 per cent. superiority over the other partners in the deal. Had *The Statesman* remained for all time "The Friend of India" of its founder's imagination and Paikpara's hope, it would not have climbed to the eminence of which it is so justly proud. This truism suggests the melancholy reflection



that the Indian intelligentsia do not adequately support the papers which champion the national cause. To so humiliating a generalization I must put in a caveat in favour of Madras where *The Hindu*, which still bears the impress of the genius of Subramania Aiyar, has the biggest circulation and the greatest influence, having left the Anglo-Indian *Madras Mail* lumbering far in the rear. Compare with its proud and comfortable position that of *The Bengalee* to which Surendra Nath Banerjea gave his best years and his most glittering talents. Then weep ye sons and daughters of Bengal.

To hark back to 1897, *The Indian Daily News*, then practically owned and actually dominated by David Yule, held a position midway between the ultra Conservative *Englishman* and the tentatively Radical *Statesman*. It gave much space to commercial news and was well thought of in Clive Street. Its political views were liberal. In the description and criticism of sports of all kinds it easily outstripped its rivals. It might have become the most popular paper in Calcutta if Yule had not refused working finance just when the prospect was roseate. It



then passed into the possession of William Graham, a clever lawyer with a ready and sarcastic pen, and held its own under the editorship first of Everard Digby and second of K. K. Sen, until it was purchased by C. R. Das and absorbed by *Forward*, the Swarajist defender of the people's rights. Just before the Anti-Partition, Fraser Blair, for some time editor of *The Englishman*, added an evening paper to Calcutta journalism. The start was brilliant but staying power was lacking. Its founder and editor is now on the staff of *The Statesman*, and although it has been twice re-incarnated it presents the tawdry appearance of a has-been who is constantly missing the bus.

The weekly Press is a distinguishing feature of Anglo-Indian journalism in Calcutta, for nothing approaching its distinction and power exists in any other city of India. In 1888 Shirley Tremearne, business-man who was also a practical lawyer and an industrious writer to the Press, founded *Capital*, a weekly journal of commerce and finance. He gave it form and temperament with such shrewd insight that it jumped at once into the front rank where it stands four-square to all the winds that blow. Much about the same time

Pat Doyle, a Civil Engineer, started *Indian Engineering* which, during his life time, was a scientific publication of great merit. It will interest you to know that Asutosh Mukerjea, before he became world-famous as an educationist, contributed to its columns articles on the higher Mathematics which attracted the notice and received the approbation of scholars in Europe and America. The light of other days has faded and all its glory gone ! *Indian Engineering* still lingers, a ghost of its former self, but the profession prefers the guidance of *The Eastern Engineer* in all technical matters. The big war of 1914-18 gave the quietus to two weeklies of old standing which we could ill afford to lose. These were *The Asian*, a purely sporting paper, and *The Indian Planters' Gazette*, familiarly known as *The Pig* which added a sporting supplement to its budget of planting and general news. *The Asian* was the creation of an Australian journalist named Targett, the first in India to realize the now generally accepted canon that advertisements must pay the whole cost of a paper and more, if financial success is to be achieved. In the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century sport was a consuming interest of the European Plantation ;

naturally *The Asian* became an imperial authority and was read everywhere. *The Pig* catered for a more restricted congregation with a debonair virility which was always a refreshment.

In 1904, I was offered and accepted the editorship of *The Indian Planters' Gazette*, and finally broke away from daily journalism to which I had given twenty-one of the best years of my life. It was a wrench for I had been very happy battling in the storm and stress for a place in the sun. A journalist's portion was not all beer and skittles in that time ; for one thing he was generally considered "no class" by European High Society. I recall a lurid illustration of this snobbery in a hotel in Madras in 1889. Rudyard Kipling's inimitable letters, "From Sea To Sea" were appearing in *The Pioneer*, and one night at dinner they became the theme of discussion. An R. A. Colonel, who held the post of Inspector-General of Ordnance, was sitting at the head of the table and was obviously bored. At long last he chipped in with a question addressed to the company at large : "Have you met any of these writing fellows in the flesh? They are the most awful bounders imaginable, and I am

sure this chap Kipling is no exception." I felt moved to protest and disclose my profession, but I recollected in time the classical story of Rabelais and the Pope. If Kipling, the pride of *The Pioneer*, was treated with such disparagement by a bureaucratic high priest, what would be the fate of an obscure freelance like myself who professed an unpopular religion and was an Irish Nationalist to boot? There was a time, not so very long ago, when a Civil Servant, who acted as the Census Commissioner, in his official report, bracketed journalists with soothsayers and circumcisers; that was the exact measure of the esteem in which the average journalist was held by the Higher Bureaucracy. Recently there has been a change in the attitude from contempt and suspicion to respect and appreciation, not because the profession has attracted men of greater culture and respectability than formerly, but simply because the foundations of bureaucratic arrogance and prejudice have been sapped by the democratic tide which is slowly but surely flooding the country. Since the War we have seen journalists, European and Indian, knighted for their services to the State and to the public; we have also seen Indian



journalists appointed Ministers of the Government, and what is more, they have been justified by their works. This triumph over the powers of darkness is something to be proud of and to be thankful for, but you will forgive a scarred veteran for saying that the waiting time was the hardest time of all. Yet believe me, Gentlemen, the broad humanity which journalism fosters when professed in the true spirit enables me with all sincerity to end my first lecture with the sentiment enshrined in some favourite lines of Oliver Wendell Holmes :

What if another sit beneath the shade  
Of the broad elm I planted by the way,—  
What if another heed the beacon light  
I set upon the rock that wrecked my keel,—  
Have I not done my task and served my kind ?

PAT LOVETT.



# JOURNALISM IN INDIA

## LECTURE II

In my first lecture I attempted to trace the influence of The Indian National Congress on the development of journalism in this country ; in this lecture the World War and its consequences will form the staple of my evolutionary theme ; but before spinning the texture of another chapter in the history of progress—what Herbert Spencer would have called another stage in “the passage from unorganized simplicity to organized complexity”—it is meet to hark back to an event arising out of the Anti-Partition agitation which can justly be claimed as a triumph for Indian journalism. The arm and burgonet of that campaign against bureaucratic reaction was the editor of *The Bengalee*, the late Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, who organized public opinion with a skill as rare as it was efficient. The Minto-Morley Reforms may not have been the absolute consequence of the passionate revolt against the Partition of Bengal, yet it is undeniable that the upheaval caused by Lord Curzon’s obduracy and Sir Bamfylde Fuller’s

superciliousness hastened the gift of democratic pottage, which, though meagre in all the essentials of representative government, still gave promise of a more substantial measure by acknowledging the right of Indians to the entry into the hitherto sacrosanct Councils of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India. Two years later the Partition, Lord Morley's "Settled Fact," was annulled by King George V himself at the Royal Durbar at Delhi, and Eastern and Western Bengal were reunited to form one presidency under a Governor in Council. It was a famous victory won at great cost, for Calcutta was dethroned from her long metropolitan ascendancy among the cities of British India, in order that Delhi might become the official capital of the Government of India. It looked like bureaucratic revenge for the failure of coercion of the worst type to muzzle the Press and intimidate Indian Nationalism. The Indian Press of Bengal bore the brunt of the battle with dauntless courage. "The first in glory, as the first in place."

It was in these boisterous years that the Associated Press of India was born, and as it has revolutionized the news half of journalism in India a short sketch of its origin and growth

is essential to my thesis. In the old days, before the Curzon Durbar in 1903, the three English owned dailies of Calcutta maintained Special Correspondents at the headquarters of the Government, their busiest time being when those headquarters were at Simla. This was a tactic of self-defence against the monopoly of *The Pioneer*, then to all intents and purposes the official organ. It was served by a capable journalist, Howard Hensman, who was *persona grata* to all the *deii majores*, civil and military. Hence it came about that the front page of '*The Pi*' was practically an official gazette the contents of which were pirated and broadcasted on publication. At Simla *The Englishman* was represented by Mr. A. J. Buck ; *The Statesman* by Mr. Everard Coates, and *The Indian Daily News* by Mr. Dallas who depended for tit-bits from the departmental arcana on his Bengalee assistant, Mr. K. C. Roy, the cleverest news-ferret and "Scoopist" Indian journalism has produced. He is much more now, but that is another matter. Single-handed none of these pickers-up of unconsidered trifles was a match for Hensman ; so it occurred to them to pool their resources to prevail against the common foe. Buck and

Coates were the first directors of the Associated Press with Roy, a kind of maid-of-all-work. When the news agencies were organized in all the important cities in India, Roy demanded a directorship which was refused; he promptly cut away from the old moorings and started on his own with his faithful henchman, U. N. Sen. The Associated Press could not withstand the opposition of the Press Bureau and the directors capitulated on the conditions imposed by Roy who, they had to acknowledge, was the mainspring of the comprehensive machine. Later on Coates was bought out by Reuter, and now the foreign and domestic intelligence published by all the "live" dailies is supplied by the same agency which also enjoys a certain amount of State patronage and support. Recently a diminutive Richmond has appeared in the field to challenge its title. He flaunts a banner with the bold device, "Free Press." His success depends upon the support he can get from the Indian Nationalist papers which are more numerous than those English-owned, but not so weakly. He is making a brave struggle against tremendous odds and if only as a corrective of the growing officialism of the older agency deserves to



succeed. The Associated Press has destroyed the old monopoly of *The Pioneer*, but at the same time it has smothered original enterprise and adventure in news-getting both at Home and abroad. The rates for Press telegrams and cables are still so high that even the most widely circulated papers are capable of no more than merely spasmodic efforts to supplement the service of the general intelligencer, which on the whole deserves our applause for 'a brave office set up to enter all the news of the time and vent it as occasion serves.' Its story might appropriately borrow for its caption the title of Ben Jonson's merry comedy *The Staple of News*. From this bare outline it is not hard to appraise the influence of Mr. K. C. Roy in the development of the modern newspaper in India. He has never been an editor, nor, in spite of the important part he has taken in politics since the Montagu Reforms came into action, has he been a political writer of eminence; nevertheless his instinct, it would be no exaggeration to call it genius, for the staple of news has proved a more potent factor in bringing Indian journalism up-to-date according to Western notions than any editor in the last forty years.



Another event which calls for more than a passing word before I come to the World War was the foundation by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta of *The Bombay Chronicle* in 1913, with Mr. Benjamin Horniman, late of *The Statesman*, as editor. Sir Pherozeshah's original intention was to purchase *The Bombay Gazette* to counteract the sinister influence of *The Times of India*, which, during the editorship of Lovat Fraser, had assisted Mr. Harrison, I.C.S., Accountant-General of Bombay to manœuvre a caucus to hurl him from his *gadi* in the Municipal Corporation of whose liberal constitution he was the real author. He was frustrated by Sir Frank Beaman, one of the directors of *The Bombay Gazette*, who still lives to oppose with a vehement pen the aspirations of Indian Nationalists. Undaunted by the rebuff, Mehta set to work to collect funds to start a brand new daily paper, which, after the fashion of Minerva, should issue from Jove's head fully equipped. When I met him at the Royal Durbar at Delhi in December, 1911, he told me that he had at last obtained the wherewithal and asked me to get him a manager whom he could send to London to purchase machinery. I did not know then that it was

his intention to offer me the editorship; he seems to have taken it for granted that I would come at his call whenever it was made, a far from unreasonable presumption considering how closely he and I had been connected during my career in Bombay. In the absence of a direct offer I fixed up, on my return to Calcutta from Delhi, with the proprietor of *Capital*, the late Mr. Shirley Tremearne, who appointed me editor, a position I still hold. In March, 1912, came Sir Pherozeshah's call which alas I had to refuse. He was deeply hurt, for he never wrote to me again, and he died before I could see him and explain. I have not ceased to regret this sad ending of a friendship of thirty years. We were both the victims of those cross purposes which the spiteful Fates are so fond of contriving to plague poor mortals. Under the guidance of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Horniman, accomplished journalist, made *The Bombay Chronicle* a power in the land. When the guidance and restraint of the wise and moderate Gamaliel were withdrawn, Horniman's impetuous politics brought him into conflict with the Government of Bombay which went to the extreme of deporting him in April, 1919. The Fourth Estate gasped, but refrained from

active agitation against the tyranny. Horniman's friends in the Legislative Assembly more than once attempted to force his recall from banishment, but the Government was inexorable. Some months since the exile defied the powers of darkness by returning without leave. The Government took no notice in spite of public ovations at Madras and Bombay. "The Public Danger" of seven years ago was treated like an extinct volcano, which was worldly wise.

The Horniman episode is a painful reminder of the peril of the journalist in India who dares to be outspoken in his criticism of the Government, but candour compels the admission that there is far more liberty allowed to the British-edited newspapers than to those edited and owned by Indian Nationalists. If Mr. Horniman had remained a member of *The Statesman's* staff it is highly improbable that he would ever have been an object of the tender attentions of the Police. He was the reputed author of the articles headed "Hardinge must go" which appeared in *The Statesman* when the capital was changed from Calcutta to Delhi. They were "hot stuff," but nothing happened to the paper in consequence.

As the editor of an Indian-owned paper which propagated an extreme nationalism he was, from the official point of view, in a different position entirely. The Indian Press has always been and is to-day, what the late Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea called, a "great instrument of propagandism;" hence the vigilant antipathy of the Bureaucracy in marked contrast to the tolerance shown to the British-edited section. Professor Rushbrook Williams in *India in 1919* indicates the reason for this difference when he writes, "Now, as a rule, if at any given moment the administration of India is seriously attacked in the Indian-edited Press, it can rely upon a certain measure of support from the English-edited Press." This is putting it very mildly, for the order to-day is that if an administrative measure is attacked by the Indian-edited Press it is the duty of the British-edited Press to defend it with all its ordnance. In the Dictionary of National Biography it is recorded of Lord Metcalfe that his greatest service to India, in his short administration of a year as acting Governor-General, was the Act of 15th September, 1835, which removed the vexatious restrictions on the liberty of the Indian Press. It would fill a



bulky tome simply to enumerate the measures taken by many of his successors to undo the noble work of that "able and sagacious administrator, of unimpeachable integrity and untiring industry." Only the other day the Government of India forged a new instrument of torture which even *The Statesman* could not approve, and forced the compliance of the Legislative Assembly by a strangle-hold. In Calcutta itself last month only the timely interference of the High Court saved two important Indian editors from being imprisoned under the new Security Act for publishing what two such learned judges as Rankin (Barrister) and Chotzner (Civilian) described as a legitimate piece of news. Lord Metcalfe, in reply to a deputation which waited on him to urge the emancipation of the Indian Press, said : "We are not here in India merely to maintain order, to collect taxes and make good the deficit ; we are here for a higher and nobler purpose, to pour into the East the knowledge, the culture, and the civilization of the West." To that sentiment the Bureaucracy has given lip-service in the intervening 90 years, but in its heart it still regards a free Press as an unmitigated nuisance and an abomination in the



sight of the Lord. The only journalist it has any use for is the sycophantic fogleman of its own brave deeds and shining virtues. I admit with delight that in my long career as a journalist in India I have met scores of Government officials, many of them Civil Servants, who have expressed the highest admiration for a journalistic independence, especially when it issued in cultured satire and spicy comment. I happened to be at Bombay in the Yuletide of 1917 when Mr. Samuel Montagu and Lord Chelmsford were there taking notes for their intended Reforms. I lunched with a Departmental Secretary one day and the conversation veered round to the official relations with the newspapers. After condemning Mr. Horniman's politics most heartily he admitted with the same warmth that it was a tonic to read his articles. Later on, a very much higher official, when discussing a certain ultra-official British editor, exclaimed: "He is very proper you know, but oh so dull." Yet none of these broad-minded officials would condemn the vicious system which would emasculate the Press in India as an organ of public opinion. I wonder how long it will take the Bureaucracy to realize that the most ingenious way of becoming

foolish is by a system. Readers of the articles on "The Press in India" which my friend Mr. S. C. Sanial contributed to *The Calcutta Review* more than 15 years ago—which articles I am glad to hear are to be republished in book form shortly—will remember that in the early days the Anglo-Indian Press was the victim of official *zoolum*. In April (a fateful month for journalists in India) 1823, Mr. John Adam, the Acting Governor-General, expelled from India Mr. James Silk Buckingham, the proprietor and editor of the *Calcutta Journal* because he dared to censure the abuses of the East Indian Company's administration. The paper was suppressed. These high-handed proceedings entailed great pecuniary loss, and redress was recommended by a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1834; but it was not until long afterwards that the East Indian Company acknowledged the injustice of the proceedings by granting Buckingham a pension of £200 a year. I am afraid there is no such luck in store for Mr. Horniman, who, game to the end, is about to start another daily paper in the Indian Nationalist interest. *Ardentum frigidus Ætnam insiluit.*

A far-reaching consequence of the World

War in the polity of India was the reform of the legislatures by inoculating them with the germs of representative government. It was a reward for the fine service to the Empire in the days of its heaviest trial by India's soldiers and India's taxpayers. It is a commonplace of military science that modern warfare no longer consists of isolated engagements between professional armies; it means the mobilization of all the resources of the nations in conflict. India grasped the fact and rose to the occasion with splendid loyalty and enthusiasm. In the general effort the co-operation of the Indian-edited Press was in the last degree edifying, considering the temptation and provocation it had received to sulk in a Cave of Adullam. The Bureaucracy, for the first time in all its history, went out of its way to propitiate this 'great instrument of propaganda.' Publicity Boards were established in diverse centres and clever officials were appointed to be nice to the men who not so long since were regarded as scum by the Secretariats. Tours were organized to enable Indian journalists to see what was going on at the battle fronts, and in many other ways their importance was officially flattered. I shall not

easily forget the apotheosis of Panchcowrie, the gallant editor of *The Nayak*, in the quadrangle of Government House when Lord Ronaldshay was King of Bengal. That was a halcyon time for Indian editors, and although of short duration its memory is sweet. There was, however, even then a fly in the ointment and strange to say it was discovered by the first British journalist whom the Government of India had knighted for meritorious service to the State through the medium of his paper. Sir Stanley Reed, editor of *The Times of India*, with sublime abnegation offered to place his talents and experience at the disposal of the Government for six months, free, gratis and for nothing, to be employed in the all-important work of publicity and propaganda. The offer was accepted with warm gratitude by the Viceroy, and he was put in charge of the Publicity Bureau at Simla. The enthusiasm of the Head of the State was not shared by the permanent officials offended by this slur on their omniscience. They took a mean revenge by denying the interloper the status and powers of a Secretary to Government which were the essentials of efficiency and success. Nevertheless Sir Stanley Reed worked wonders with an



inadequate equipment and proved to the chagrin of the sun-dried bureaucrats that given an equal chance he would have made just as good a statesman in India as Lord Harmsworth or Lord Beaverbrook in England. This brings me to a paradox which is bound to tickle the risible nerves of my audience. The British editor in India cannot become a favourite with officialdom unless he supports the Government through thick and thin. His motto must be, "The Government right or wrong"; on the other hand although he be the most egregious whole-hogger he cannot hope for a place in the Councils of the nation. An Indian editor can legitimately aspire to membership of the Viceroy's Council or to the ministry in a local Government, not so the Britisher. The reason why I cannot tell, but the fact remains. Nay, the invidious distinction goes farther. Indian journalists have been nominated by the Government of India to the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly, but British journalists look in vain for similar preferment. *The Statesman*, it is true, has provided from its staff two legislators, one imperial, one provincial, but both were elected by the European constituency of Calcutta, not nominated by the



Government. The limit of official appreciation of the British journalist is a seat in a Municipal Corporation. He is good enough as a bumble, but as a mugwump—bah. Yet such is the unreasoning and dog-like fidelity of the British Press in India to-day that it shows no resentment but carries on the good work to which it has put its hand, namely, hot refutation of Indian criticism of administrative abuses. Robert Knight was the last of the *advocati diaboli* of the old regime.

An unexpected result of the War has been a reduction in the number of British-owned and edited daily papers and more than a corresponding increase in those run absolutely by Indians. In Calcutta, for instance, we had before the War four of the former class, namely, *The Englishman*, *The Statesman*, *The Indian Daily News*, and *The Empire*. There are now only two, *The Indian Daily News* having been absorbed by *Forward*, the Swarajist organ, and *The Empire* having become an Indian property. At Bombay *The Times of India* stands alone for the British outlook. At Madras *The Madras Mail* occupies the same position of solitary grandeur. The slump in trade which followed close upon the

hectic boom excited by the Armistice is the chief reason for this contraction. Advertisements fell off and circulations decreased, and as a British-edited paper is a much more costly business than its Indian counterpart the weakest went to the wall. In politics the British daily papers have come to represent one stereotyped view, so that more than one of them in any centre is an expensive superfluity. The conditions of the Indian Press are markedly different. Politics and religion are so mixed that points of view are numerous and likewise the instruments of propaganda. Indian papers are not all self-supporting, but that is in most cases a secondary consideration with their owners. On the other hand no British individual or company would dream of running a paper which is a perpetual tax on his purse. It may seem a rash thing for me to say, but it is my considered opinion that with the evolution of representative Government, which cannot be checked in India any more than in other parts of the Empire, the influence of the Indian Press in politics and administration will increase at the expense of the British fans. The future is for the Indian journalist, and his training is a paramount question which

the universities of India will have to tackle in earnest. English is not only the common language of your intelligentsia—I might without exaggeration call it their mother tongue—it is also the common bond of Indian nationality. Without any intention to belittle the value of the vernacular Press which caters for the commonalty, it seems to me self-evident that Indian journalism, which employs the English language as its vehicle of expression, will be the journalism that will count while Home Rule is being fought for and when Home Rule has been won. Now it is a truism that Indians, who are ready writers of expressive and grammatical English, are alumni of the universities; when the system of secondary education in this country is revolutionized it may happen that there will be a number of young men, who, by gaining the school-leaving certificate, will also have acquired that facility of writing idiomatic English which is a *sine qua non* in an Indian journalist's equipment; but that time is not yet. For a generation and more the universities must be the recruiting grounds for the Indian Press. In its history lawyers have taken the foremost place; they are still in the forefront to-day. Whatever

may be said of their casuistry and their propensity to forensic dialectic it must be accounted to them for grace that they have established and maintained a very high literary standard in editorials bearing a close resemblance to the fine prose of the mid-Victorian Press in England. It is pretty certain that, as the development of democracy in India increases the power of the Indian Press, journalism will become more and more attractive to young lawyers, especially as the remuneration is bound to keep pace with growing prestige. In the circumstances would it not be of the greatest value to the cause of Indian Nationality to raise journalism to the dignity of an academic career? If journalism could be added to the system of Post-Graduate studies of Calcutta University I feel sure, to put it commercially, there would be a cent. per cent. profit on the stern persevering promotion necessary to overcome the obstacles in the way. Journalism would become a profession drawing to itself young men of brains and ability, and that is what is wanted in India. "The suggestion of a school of journalism at Columbia University in the U.S.A. came from a man of the people, Pulitzer, a journalist, who had to



work for his own education, and in spite of the handicap made good to a phenomenal degree ; yet he was shrewd enough to realize that there should be a better system, so that those who were to take up a career fraught, when that career was a downward one, with so much peril to the public, should be trained under auspices that would tend to develop character." I quote Mr. George Henry Payne, the historian of journalism in the U.S.A. "We have no Pulitzer's in India, but there are among us millionaires to whom it would be a fleabite to endow a chair and found a school. They could not give of their abundance to a nobler cause." In my long Indian career of forty-three years I have had to do with hundreds of Indian journalists, many of them intimately associated with me in the conduct of a newspaper. What struck me forcibly was the vast difference between those who wrote leaders and the working reporters whose business was the collection of news ; the former were men of culture with scant knowledge of technique ; the latter devoid of culture but with a keen nose for a "story" and an instinctive sense of display. This contrast is to be found in an English newspaper office but not to such an amazing extent.



The English reporter, as a rule, tries hard by study and observation to improve his style and obtain a grasp of affairs, not so the Indian reporter who is content to go to the end of the chapter as he began by pelting the long-suffering news-editor with valuable information in execrable language. The conditions which chiefly contribute to the perpetuation of groundlings in the lower ranks are the manuscript eloquence of our public men and the vicious co-operation of penny-a-liners destroying originality and initiative. The only way to suppress these evils is to make journalism a profession instead of a trade as wooden and dishonest as a *modi's* or a *kyah's*.

I have refrained, gentlemen, as much as possible, from loading these lectures with personal reminiscences of journalists, English and Indian, who figure prominently in the long vista of departed years which is the solace of my autumnal mood, for had I once begun I could not have ended within the compass of a fair-sized book. I may say at once that my memories of them are all happy. Rivalry and competition, hard knocks and swift retribution I have experienced in abundance, but no sting to leave a festering sore. The prevailing

spirit was regimental loyalty which might lead to temporary conflict but at the same time engendered mutual respect and professional pride. Had I my time over again with a fairy godmother to give me a choice of vocations I would plump without hesitation for journalism which is the only life in spite of its strange vicissitudes, its bitter trials and its glorious poverty. To quote the American poetess, Mary Clemmer,

To serve thy generation, this thy fate  
"Written in water," swiftly fades thy name;  
But he who loves his kind does, first and late,  
A work too great for fame.

PAT LOVETT.

# AN OUTSIDER'S ODYSSEY

*"Ut pueris placeas, et declamatio  
fias."*—JUVENAL.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

It was a saying of Napoleon that there is no such thing in life as accident; what is commonly so-called is fate misnamed. The lesson of my own life inclines me to accept the philosophy, and without the slightest intention of making converts I proceed to the demonstration in self-justification.

My adoption of journalism as a means of a living often seemed to me the accident of an accident, but it is significant that once in I made no serious attempt to break away and engage in some other occupation less laborious and more remunerative, although opportunities were not wanting. The position I eventually attained in the profession, after much picturesque vicissitude, compels the belief that it was fate which, in October, 1883, took me into the dingy office of *The Times of*

*India* in search of employment. I was armed with a letter of introduction to the editor, Mr. Henry Curwen, from Mr. Mathew Starling, a leading barrister, who was for many years Clerk of the Crown in the Bombay High Court. I was engaged at once as a junior reporter, although I had not a scrap of journalistic experience to commend me. By the same token, neither Mr. Starling nor Mr. Curwen acted on the conviction that he was assisting me to my real vocation. The former merely discharged a family obligation by disposing of me without trouble or responsibility; the latter wanted a hand, and as I was a well-favoured and well-educated youth he thought me good goods for the wages he was prepared to pay. In the five years I worked under him he never once encouraged the hope that by patient industry, or from a sudden awakening of dormant genius, I would get to the top, and make a decent living by newspaper work; on the contrary, after he had time to take my measure, he often and often urged me to employ the influence of men in position, whose favour I had gained, to obtain an appointment in which my abilities would have more scope, and my industry be rewarded with a salary

sufficient to maintain the status of a saheb. Whether he thought I would never have the pretension to hold forth pontifically on public questions, or the lack of training in a newspaper office in England would always be a bar to my advancement in India, I know not ; this I do know : the left-handed encouragement I got from my first editor was well calculated to drive me out of journalism almost as soon as I had entered it.

Having found me a billet, my benefactor, Mr. Starling, took no more notice of me. As a matter of fact I did not thereafter court his attention. I realized that I was very small potatoes and did not quarrel with the proposition. My editor, also, did not unduly bother his head about my progress. He handed me over to the sub-editor, Mr. Arnold Wright, who, the Chief Reportership being in commission, made up the Reporters' Diary. I was put through my facings, not by being shown how, but by being told to discover things for myself as soon as possible. The only advice I ever had from Mr. Wright was, "Read *The Times* and you won't go wrong." I read *United Ireland* instead, much to the disgust of the editor when he heard it. There never lived an



Orangeman who hated Irish Nationalism and its protagonist, Parnell, the god of my idolatry, so bitterly and so unreasonably as this kinsman of John Curwen, the panegyrist of American liberty. But in the early eighties and long, long after Home Rule for Ireland was an abomination in the sight of Anglo-Indian society, so that Curwen's ostentatious implacability may have been no more than a pose to ravish a clientele he would have as his very own.

My early development as a journalist was like Topsy's transition from infancy to girlhood. "I specs I growed." Mr. Wright, who was not unduly inspiring or sympathetic, insisted on proficiency in shorthand, if I would make a passable reporter worth the pittance of £4, which I received once a month. Pitman's Phonography then became a vexation worse than the French irregular verbs of my college days; but I had to overcome my disgust of the grind or go into a wilderness where parental manna had ceased to fall. By dint of laborious hours in the law courts I at last acquired the dexterity to take a fair note, but as long as I remained a reporter to the daily Press there was nothing I hated more than to have to

record verbatim and reproduce the effusion of some riotous wind-bag, and the Lord knows the species swarmed in Bombay when I began my quest.

It is a comfort that life is full of compensations. The Providence watching over the wandering Celt was more than kind to me in my tribulation. After the first year of my novitiate I had comparatively little shorthand work to do. The wide-awake sub-editor discovered my ability to write intelligently on all kinds of sport, and as there was no one in the covenanted staff who could do likewise, I was released from a drudgery I detested to engage in a labour I loved. Before I came on the scene outside experts were employed to provide accounts of horse-racing, jackal hunts, polo, cricket and football matches, and athletic meetings. They were, for the most part, amateurs of independent means and therefore expensive; but the cost was not grudged, for sport was most important to a daily paper which catered for the sahebs, who made it the religion of their leisure. When he gave me charge of the department, the editor added two pounds to my screw, thus effecting a big economy.

I soon became well known in sporting circles, and for years my reputation in Indian journalism was of a writer on sport ; that and nothing more. When I left Parsee Bazar Street in October, 1888, Mr. Curwen, who was angry at my defection, was still good enough to certify that "I was a first-class reporter, quick and intelligent, and especially good at sport." *Hinc totam infelix vulgatur fama per urbem.* None of my friends and well-wishers believed me capable of the heavy "legitimate ;" none would have me anything else but "Doggy" the sporting scribe. Nevertheless I crowned my career by becoming the editor of *Capital*, a journal famous throughout the world for its authority in the economics and politics of India. It took me 28 years to reach that goal. I had to live down a reputation, than which there is nothing harder, especially if an undiscerning public decides that you are lucky above the common to have gained it, and in your vanity you hug the distinction.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ANGLO-INDIAN PRESS OF BOMBAY

#### *The Higher Commands*

The change that has taken place in Anglo-Indian journalism during the years of my experience is one of degree, not one of kind. It is remarkable that the daily papers that count are not more numerous to-day than in 1883, and they are nearly the same. At Bombay, just before the War, a paper of liberal tendencies, once popular and influential, died of senile decay, but the gap has been filled by a radical sheet of hectic heat. The Old Brigade has, with one notorious exception, been true to tradition. The early characteristics remain, but there is evidence of vigorous growth. There is now far more enterprise in the collection of news, foreign and domestic, and photography is often employed to illustrate the letterpress. Greater attention is paid to technique and display, and with the introduction of the linotype and the rotary the printing is immensely superior. The commercial side of journalism is better understood ;



advertisers and subscribers are sought for, often meretriciously. On the other hand the old literary standard has not been maintained, and there has been a contraction of influence. Now more than ever does a paper belong to the province in which it is printed and published ; beyond the confines it exerts no authority and excites little interest. *The Pioneer* of the eighties and nineties of the last century has ceased to exist ; we have only its ghost. The monopoly, which the higher bureaucracy and the military caste did their best to perpetuate, was killed by the ubiquity of the Associated Press of India,—a twentieth century phenomenon—and also by a hardening of local self-sufficiency.

At Bombay in 1883 two Anglo-Indian dailies divided the support of the English-reading public. “Divided” is perhaps too harsh a term to use in this connection, for the majority of subscribers were common to both. Those were the days of small circulation, little public curiosity, and happy tolerance of putting by for to-morrow what was inconvenient to print to-day. There was not much to choose between *The Times of India* and *The Bombay Gazette* in news-mongering ; neither



was out for "scoops ;" the only real rivalry was in the manufacture of opinion. Every politician and critic wished to read the leaders in both papers, so they bought both in order to compare blast with counterblast. There was no love lost between the editors who were in a high degree antithetical. Mr. Grattan Geary, who owned and edited *The Gazette*, had previously edited *The Times* and for a while had Mr. Curwen as an assistant. They disagreed in every particular. Mr. Geary purchased *The Gazette* from Mr. J. M. Maclean, who, by his outspoken criticism of the bureaucracy, had made it a power in the land. It stood for progressive liberalism with a marked sympathy for Indian aspirations. The new editor added a proclivity for Parnellism, and was contemptuously referred to in the Byculla and Bombay Clubs as "The Fenian," the most opprobrious epithet then known to Anglo-India. *The Times* under Mr. Curwen became ultra conservative, an out-and-out-supporter of the bureaucracy, and an exponent of that extreme Anglo-Indianism which regarded any concession to Indian claims as treason to its own domination. It was the cult of the Orange Lodge translated to

India. It will be easily understood how much sectarian bitterness there was between the high commands when with an Irishman's perversity or ill-luck I enlisted under the wrong flag. This feeling increased to rancour when Lord Reay, an advanced Radical, became Governor of Bombay in succession to Sir James Fergusson, an old-fashioned Tory. Mr. Geary supported with a heart and a half "The Dutchman" and his pro-Indian policy. Mr. Curwen flouted the degenerate Chief of Clan Mackay, and after five years of uncompromising opposition, dismissed him with Canning's famous sarcasm: "The fault of the Dutch is giving too little and asking too much." This vulgar *ad captandum* comment, though puerile, offensive, and maliciously untrue, tickled the gallery to which Curwen was playing with an unerring commercial instinct; and Reuter cabled it to London to delight Printing House Square and the Unionist caucus. After Lord Reay came a long succession of Unionist Governors under whom *The Times* consolidated its position. Before Curwen died, in 1892, it was the most popular and powerful paper from Belgaum to Quetta. With his rival's increasing success

Geary lost his head. Having run with the hare he attempted to hunt with the hounds and came an awful cropper. Before his death, some years after Curwen's, *The Gazette* was moribund. It was discredited even by the Indians to whom it formerly appealed. The educated native of Bombay, more especially the Parsee, has no use for the Vicar of Bray.

In 1883, Mr. Curwen's assistant editor—there was only one such as long as I remained with the paper—was Mr. Samuel Digby, brother of the famous Mr. William Digby, one of the idols of Indian Nationalism. If he was a Liberal in those days he certainly dissembled his love. The rank and file saw little of him, and the general impression was that he was a colourless second-in-command. He had succeeded a man named Boyd, who, while acting as editor, ran the paper into a libel suit, a sin against the Holy Ghost, according to the code of the proprietor, old Colonel Nassau Lees. Boyd had to go, and Digby took warning. He left the paper at the end of 1886 and his faint footprint in the sand was soon obliterated. His subsequent career in London was so respectable, his den at the National Liberal Club so open to Indian Progressives, that

there can be no doubt he was in the wrong caserne at Bombay. The only personal recollection I have of him was his reception of a hot protest against the want of tact of the Chief Reporter, who, without consulting my inclination, had posted me to describe a lecture on "The Inquisition in Mexico" by an American Minister at the Methodist Church. I was the only Catholic on the reporting staff, and my militancy was the joke of my associates. The Chief Reporter's motive was therefore either malicious or mischievous. I was just in the mood to resent either. I had attended, before breakfast, the execution of a Persian gentleman with whom I had been familiar on the racecourse. I had spent a fagging day in the Sessions Court reporting and describing a murder case in which the accused was an Eurasian miner who had shot his wife; in the evening I had played in a big football match. It was atrocious that I should have to end such a day listening to an ignorant diatribe against my own religion. But there was no getting in touch with the Chief Reporter who had gone to Bandora acourting. I had to go to the lecture (the Lord save us), and I returned to the office near mid-night simply



furious. There was a light in the editor's room; I made bold to enter without being announced. Digby, who was then acting for Curwen, was pouring over the proof of his leader. Without giving him a chance to resent my intrusion I poured forth my hot heart. I don't remember what I said or how I said it, but I do remember that he seemed highly amused. When I pulled up, he agreed that the Chief Reporter had been guilty of doubtful form, but he added quickly, "Why not go and write exactly what you feel." "It would not be printed," said I, with something of a scoff. "Leave that to me," he replied kindly. I have often regretted that I did not preserve a cutting of my report. All I wrote did not appear, but even after Digby's judicious redaction it was fiery enough to excite the terrible wrath of the Reverend Mr. Gladwin, Editor of *The Indian Watchman*, the organ of the American Wesleyan Mission. The polemical uproar that ensued was glorious balm for my wounded feelings. I was only 22 and dearly loved a row.

To return to the staff. When Mr. Digby left *The Times* it seemed to us a matter of course that he would be succeeded by



Mr. Arnold Wright, who had been with the paper from 1879. He was an able all-round journalist, industrious and conscientious. But Curwen had other views. He brought out from London a Mr. Romanes, a leader-writer of some note, and Mr. Wright left India, like many another faithful steward, unhonoured and unsung. Mr. Romanes did not stay long, the work was uncongenial and there were better prospects in England. Instead of promoting the sub-editor, Mr. Furneaux, Curwen again imported a superior journalist from London. He was a Mr. Mitchell. He could write vivaciously on most topics, did quite well as assistant editor, but came to grief when he was left in charge on Curwen going home on leave. Some critics were inclined to blame the grandmotherly interference of Mr. G. W. Forrest, the Elphinstone College Professor of English History, whom Curwen had asked to give an eye to things; but I am afraid poor Mitchell would have wilted in any case. He was too Bohemian to carry corn. After him came Mr. Sarle, who was with the paper when Curwen died. I left Parsee Bazar Street a month or so after he arrived, but we became well acquainted when I was editor of *The*

*Advocate of India* in the next decade. That reminiscence belongs to a future chapter.

The first assistant editor I knew on *The Bombay Gazette* was a brilliant Irishman named Drury. His divorce was sudden, and according to rumour was due to incompatibility of temper with the predominant partner, not an easy man to get on with. In 1884, Mr. Thomas Jewell Bennett came to *The Gazette* from the *London Standard*, and soon proved that he could accommodate himself to all circumstances. He remained with Geary for eight years, wrote leaders in favour of Lord Reay's pro-Indian policy, of Parnell and Irish Home Rule. But Curwen must have discovered in him an adroit and professional advocate, who could argue as well on the other side, for in his will he directed that Bennett should be offered the editorship of *The Times* with the option of buying his share, an opportunity the *Gazette* man did not let slip.

So much for the Higher Commands. It will be gathered from what I have written that in the first lustre of my odyssey the rival editors completely represented their papers and shaped their destinies. Curwen left the

commercial side of *The Times* to Mr. C. E. Kane, who laid the foundations of the splendid job press on which the great material prosperity of the whole enterprise rested. Geary quarrelled early with his manager, Mr. Jehanghir Murzban, and attempted to run the business himself. The result of this self-sufficiency was fatal. *The Gazette* is extinct; *The Times* is probably the best newspaper property in India.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ANGLO-INDIAN PRESS OF BOMBAY

#### *The Rank and File*

The editors and assistant-editors of *The Times* and *The Gazette*, to whom I have given so much attention in the last chapter, were the sahebs of the Press. They could afford to join the leading social clubs, Byculla, Bombay, and Yacht ; and their covenant gave them a patent of respectability which was rarely disputed. Both papers imported their Chief Reporters from England, but on a minor covenant from a social point of view. These non-coms started on Rs. 250 per mensem, and, therefore, could aspire to nothing more expensive or toney than a second-rate hotel in the Fort, or a shabby-genteel boarding house in the Grant's Buildings, usually kept by a superior Eurasian widow and much affected by covenanted trades-assistants. If their luck was in they would in time become sub-editors on Rs. 500 per mensem, but that was the limit of their aspiration.

As long as Curwen remained editor of

*The Times* the rule held fast that a journalist, who came out to India as a Chief Reporter, could never become a real saheb. That prejudice was at the bottom of his refusal to make Arnold Wright assistant-editor in succession to Sam Digby. I fancy that Geary, who was brought up in the same tradition as his rival, would have been as true to prejudice if he could have afforded the expense of importing an assistant-editor when Bennett left him. Mr. Plinston, who was then sub-editor, thereafter combined the two offices until Geary's death. Under Mrs. Geary, the widow, who inherited the property, he became an editorial Pooh Bah, editor, assistant-editor, and sub-editor, all in one. The first ranker to obtain a commission on *The Times* was Mr. (now Sir) Stanley Reed, who came out as Chief Reporter in 1897. By that time the Bombay Gymkhana and Y.M.C.A. had greatly democratized European Society in Bombay, and the old gradations of caste had practically disappeared. For all that, Reed was extraordinarily lucky. Furneaux, a sub-editor of the old school, retired soon after his advent and he got an early rise. Bennett, the editor, and Lovat Fraser, the assistant-editor, were



like himself, Bristol journalists, who had risen from the ranks. All three fraternized. When Bennett left Bombay in 1901 on a vain quest of Parliamentary honours in England, he appointed Lovat Fraser editor, Reed being advanced assistant-editor in contradiction of all precedent. In 1907, the *gadi*, founded by Curwen, was for the first time mounted by a man, who began his service as a subordinate. I wonder if the founder turned in his grave. The stupid injustice of Curwen's prejudice is glaringly illustrated by the fact that the ranker-editor has ruled with remarkable success for ten years, and given the *gadi* a lustre unique in the annals of Anglo-Indian journalism. The Glasgow University in 1909 conferred on Mr. Reed the honorary degree of LL.D. Lord Hardinge made him a knight in 1916. Poor Arnold Wright! Reed's superior in every branch of journalism.

Shortly after I joined *The Times*, Mr. J. H. Furneaux arrived from England to fill the vacancy of Chief Reporter. He became sub-editor in 1887, and Mr. R. D. Hughes was imported for the minor post. Neither was above the average. Of the former, I have already written; the latter eventually gave up

journalism for trade, and practically founded the Bombay Presidency Trades Association, of which he was the first secretary. *The Gazette* imported three Chief Reporters while I was with *The Times*—Messrs. Williams, White and Plintson. All were a cut above the ordinary. The first-named, after a spell of sub-editorship, returned to England to join *The St. James's Gazette*. Frank White, one of the most brilliant youngsters to seek a fortune in Indian journalism, was drowned off Goa, having fallen overboard Lord Brassey's famous yacht, "Sunbeam." After lingering on *The Gazette* to assist at its obsequies, Mr. Plintson became secretary of the Bombay Yacht Club in the green autumn of his days.

In the chapter on Anglo-Indian literature, which Professor Edward Farley Oaten has contributed to the fourteenth volume of the Cambridge History of English Literature, he writes: "Anglo-Indian literature is, for the most part, merely English literature strongly marked by local colour." The same may be said of Anglo-Indian journalism. No attempt has ever been made to rear a school racy of the soil, such as exists in Australia, South Africa and Canada. It is still an axiom that the

journalist, who has not been trained in England, is not of much use. Journalism as a profession has not, therefore, attracted the best brains of the Domiciled Community. Eurasian editors and reporters of merit have not been numerous. Anglo-Indians, who, without Home training, have made successful editors, may be counted on the fingers of one hand. Educated Indians have not been encouraged by the Anglo-Indian papers except as occasional correspondents and news-gatherers. Whether this is good or bad for the country, and for the prestige of journalism, I need not stay to discuss.

Among the privates of the reporting staffs of *The Times* and *The Gazette*, there were both Indians and Eurasians. Each paper employed two Parsees. Mr. Nanabhoy Chichghar of the former, and Nanabhoy Masani of the latter, were cousins. They were well educated, but neither, if I remember rightly, had a university degree. They were expert shorthand writers and invaluable in reporting law cases and the proceedings of public meetings. Chichghar remained a journalist to the last, winding up with a Guzeratee paper of his own. Masani left the

Press, before he reached middle age, for the service of the Bombay Corporation, which offered him an easy competency and a provision for his old age. Both these amiable men were firm friends of mine, and I owe not a little to the introductions they gave me to leaders of the Parsee community, but for whom this outsider might never have reached a haven of rest.

Two other Parsee reporters of my day died in harness. Mr. Cursetjee Screwallah of *The Times* was, what in Ireland we affectionately call, a "character." His knowledge of the English language was not profound, and he had a lofty contempt for Linley Murray. My first lessons in sub-editing were learnt in making ordinary English of his rhapsodic Carlylese. But he was an untiring ferret for news. He knew everybody and had the gift of the Paraclete. He could make even the taciturn Superintendent of the Detective Police talk like a gossip at a christening: "I'm Screwallah," he would say, "and I worm it out of them." Not bad for a junior reporter on Rs. 60 a month. His greatest pride, however, was that there was no reporter, in Bombay, who could fill the account of the



arrival or departure of some swell with a longer list of names of those present. This was an asset of considerable value, for the vanity of publicity was rampant among Indians who hoped to bask in the sunshine of official patronage.

Darashaw Chichghar of the *Gazette* did for his paper much the same work as Cursetjee Screwallah for us, but he was a different kind of man entirely. He had had a fair English education, was highly esteemed in his own community, and had private means, which made him independent of his salary. He took to journalism for the influence it gave him in the law courts and the Secretariat. He perfected a system of abbreviations, which made him almost equal to a master of phonography. He was the pink of gentility, always carefully groomed and precisely habitted. Nobody could write so comprehensive an obituary notice of an Indian worthy, especially if he were a Parsee.

Besides myself there was no other European junior reporter on *The Times* until the last year of my service, when Mr. David Pinder joined. He is still on the staff. There was, however, a flamboyant Eurasian, named



Thomas Holtham, who had a local reputation as a poet, because he had parodied *The Deserted Village*. His powers of description and narrative were respectable, but he never made a serious study of affairs, and was happy in a riotous Bohemianism which eventuated in emigration to Australia. *The Gazette* had a smart local hand named Cyril Avron, who might have distinguished himself in the higher grades of the profession had he not died young from consumption. He had been a medical student before becoming a reporter. He was enterprising and ambitious, and by steady reading and observation was fast making up for the lack of a college education. A remarkable personality was common to both papers. We called him "Lundy," because he was lame and erratic. His full name was Lynn Pereira. He was an Anglo-Portuguese from Cochin. He belonged to a family which in the days of sailing ships had given many hardy mariners to the Indian Mercantile Marine. He himself had served for some months before the mast, but an unfortunate fall from a yard to the deck had permanently lamed him and compelled him to abandon the sea for a more precarious living ashore. He

“did” the shipping, the hospitals, and the morgue for both papers. He was a most amusing raconteur when half seas over, and at all times a cheerful soul, who paid all debts to the masthead.

Such were the privates of the Anglo-Indian Press in Bombay when I enlisted. No locally engaged reporter could hope to earn a salary of more than Rs. 200 a month, no matter how smart and capable. As in Government service so in journalism, nobody counted but the Covenanted. If a local man would find himself he must emigrate and gain fame. He might then return to some rival of his early love. That is how I became editor of *The Advocate of India*. In Calcutta and Madras the local prophet had more honour, but what was true of Bombay was generally true of the leading Anglo-Indian dailies of the rest of India. The condition persists to the present day. It has added another caste to this country of innumerable castes. In England and elsewhere approved merit is the only passport to distinction in journalism; in India the outsider, who does not possess the cachet of a London covenant, has only a dog's chance.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INDIAN PRESS

A few words will suffice to introduce the Indian and Vernacular Press of Bombay. In 1883 there were no daily papers written in English and edited by Indians to proclaim the Indian point of view. There is none to-day. In this phase of the development of journalism Bombay has, so far, taken no part, which passivity is in strange contrast with the activity of Calcutta and Madras. *The Advocate of India* was started in 1886 with the blessings and, I believe, the pecuniary support of Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta and Dr. Thomas Blaney. Its mission was to keep Indian politicians in countenance, but it never became the accredited organ of the Bombay Presidency Association or any other political body. Its first editor was an Eurasian named Gomes, who had received his training on *The Statesman* of Calcutta. To conceal his Portuguese origin—he was related to Madame Alice Gomes, the famous singer—he assumed the name of Bailey ; his brother, also a journa-

list, became Howell. Bailey came to Bombay as Chief Reader to *The Bombay Gazette*. He was the moving spirit in establishing *The Advocate* as an evening paper, but except his association with Mr. Robert Knight there was nothing to recommend him as an exponent of Indian aspirations. As a matter of fact he had very little knowledge of the policy of Young India, and less sympathy with the cause. Dr. Blaney wrote a good deal for the paper on municipal affairs and materially assisted the agitation for the reforms finally granted by Lord Reay. Bailey failed egregiously as an editor, and returned to Calcutta to become a sub-editor on *The Statesman*, his old paper. Mr. Jehanghir Murzban bought *The Advocate*, after he quarrelled with Mr. Grattan Geary and left *The Gazette*. He also bought at nearly the same time the *Jame-Jamshed* from Mr. K. M. Shroff. *The Advocate* then became a liberal paper with an Indian political flavour. In 1894, when I was editor, Mr. Murzban sold it to Mr. F. F. Gordon, a reporter of *The Bombay Gazette*, who had made some money by reporting a notorious libel suit at Hyderabad. He soon dropped all pretension of liberalism and Indian nationa-



lism, the paper became an aggressive supporter of the bureaucracy. The Indian National Congress had to wait until 1912 for an accredited organ at Bombay. Shortly after the Royal Durbar at Delhi in December, 1911, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta set seriously to work to accomplish his long cherished design of publishing an English daily paper at Bombay, to voice the political opinions of educated Indians, and at the same time to expose the increasing autocracy of the Indian bureaucracy. He would have been glad to have it edited and produced solely by Indians, but this he found to be impracticable. He offered me the editorship, but I declined, for the editorship of *Capital* was then within my grasp, and besides I could not accept the whole of my life-long friend's political platform. He secured Mr. Benjamin Horniman as the first editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*. My refusal was providential, for I could never have done what Mr. Horniman succeeded in doing, and I would have fallen very short of the expectations of my friends. Much water had flowed under the bridges since I left *The Advocate of India* in 1895.

In the eighties there was at Bombay an



excellent weekly paper edited by a Parsee and written wholly in English. I refer to the famous *Indian Spectator*, which propagated the gospel of Mr. Byramji Malabari, the messiah of female education in India. Another Parsee weekly, *The Rast Goftar*, published an English supplement, which was written by Mr. Kaikoshroo Kabrajee, a shrewd publicist, who also had a big vogue as a novelist and dramatist of Parsee social life. Later on another Guzeratee weekly, the *Kaiser-I-Hind*, also published an English supplement which was written by Mr., now Sir Dinshaw Wacha, whose *forte* was finance and political economy. But this weekly Press was a thing apart from the life of the English reporter who met none of its representatives in association or conflict. I had to become an editor before I realized its status and value.

In my experience there has always been a vigilant and enterprising vernacular daily Press in Bombay, the best of the papers being edited and produced by Parsees, who use Guzeratee, the language of the market-place and rialto, as their medium. In 1883 the *Bombay Samachar* and the *Jame-Jamshed* had, as now, the largest circulations. Both

were staffed by men who could write English as easily as their mother tongue. Two reporters stand out in bold relief in my memory : Kapadia and Shastri, who hated each other like poison. The latter belonged to the priestly caste and always wore the white turban which distinguishes the dustoor, but he was a priest of the kidney of Father Prout, and many a merry junket I had in his company. Kapadia might have passed for a village schoolmaster. He was snuffy and stuffy, but you had to get up early to steal a march on him. The Parsee Press was intensely tribal, and although it has moved with the times in the collection and presentment of news, its appeal is still confined to the Parsees.

## CHAPTER V

### POLITICS IN THE EIGHTIES

In the first five years of my career politics in India were generally interesting; often exciting. The last days of Lord Ripon, the best-beloved and at the same time the most hated Viceroy India has had since the Mutiny, were enlivened by the fierce racial tumult over the Ilbert Bill. The outstanding event of the Viceroyalty of Lord Dufferin was the birth of the Indian National Congress at Bombay. These were imperial matters affecting all the educated classes of the country. Of more local concern was the agitation for the reform of the constitution of the Bombay Municipal Corporation which at long last won to victory in 1888. I would be wanting in candour to insinuate that I was at all impressed by these affairs of such far-spreading consequence. To the best of my recollection I did not even try to understand their purport or significance; yet all the time I was following with the deepest anxiety the vicissitudes of the Irish struggle for Home Rule, pouring over

every speech made by Parnell, Dillon, Healy, Sexton, and O'Brien, also the great orations of Gladstone on a subject he had made his own. At this distance of time it seems strange to me that whereas the politics of my native land stirred me to the depths, those of the land of my adoption left me cold. But the reason is plain. I was very young when I entered Indian journalism—not quite twenty years of age—and my editor decided that my *métier* was sport. Politics were at a discount in the sporting circles in which I hunted, and it is not unfair to say that they treated all the serious things of life with cavalier levity. I readily adapted myself to the environment and for three years my time was pleasantly, if not profitably, employed.

It was not until the end of the epoch that the gravities of public life began to appeal to me. I owed the new bent to a memorable association at Ahmedabad with the late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, then, and until the close of his long and honourable career, the first of Indian statesmen. He was one of the counsels engaged in a *cause celebre* in which an Indian Civil Servant was tried by a commission of his peers for a peculiarly sordid offence. I was

the special correspondent of the *Times of India*; it was my first essay in an unfamiliar genre. There being no hotels at Ahmedabad, and as the dak bungalow was full of officials, many of those connected with the trial stayed at the Railway Station, where the waiting rooms were many and comfortable, and the catering of the Goanese bulter, Mr. Athaide, wholesome and satisfying. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was then the burning question of English politics, and it was the inevitable and invariable topic at our dinner table. The discussion was excellent refreshment after a long day in court. The Englishmen, to wit, Mr. J. D. Inverarity, the famous leader of the Bombay Bar, Messrs. Frank Chalk and Reginald Gilbert, solicitors as famous, were, after the manner of their kind, Unionists to a man. It was their delight to make me frantic by their clever perversions of Ireland's case; I was no match for them, but when I was fit to cry with rage, Mehta would come to the rescue, and the combat of wits took on a different complexion. *Cum duplicantur lateres venit Moses*. The Parsee publicist had a complete mastery of the Irish question in all its aspects, historical, religious, and economic; and his presentation



was so lucid and forceful that my tormentors soon became listeners instead of disputants. What attracted me most of all was his adroit application of the logic of Gladstone to the conditions of India, in many cases similar to those of Ireland. This led me to study the grievances and aspirations of the Indian school of politics of which he was the most brilliant leader. It made me realize that sport was not the whole of life in India, but only its recreation.

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